Post-Urartian tombs of Lori Berd

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Long-term excavations at Lori Berd's burial ground and localised excavations of the settlement revealed a millennia-long habitation of the site by local population, the beginnings of which are evident from the end of the 3rd millennium BC. Through excavations it became clear that the Lori Berd society had already reached a high level of socio-economic status and maintained its positions during the Urartian and post-Urartian periods.

Lori Berd is characterised with its vast tombs of the Middle through Late Bronze, Early Iron Age, and Urartian period. Until 2008 it seemed that this marked the end of the famous Lori Berd burial ground's history, where life stopped sometime after the 7th-6th centuries BC.

Nevertheless, the discovery of new tombs in 2008 in one of the lower parts of the burial ground showed that burial practices continued at the Lori Berd during the Late Urartian – Post Urartian or 'early Armenian' period. According to modern chronology accepted in Armenian historiogaphy, it corresponds to the Early Yervandid period. It is noteworthy that these tombs contain both Urartian and especially Achaemenid period artefacts, which date to the 6th-5th centuries BC.

The excavated tombs (tombs No. 105-110) attest to the socio-economic, political, and cultural changes that took place at Lori Berd. The tombs have an oval-shaped, earth and stone filled tumulus, which was oriented in an east-west direction. The rectangular stone-lined chambers are built either of parallel slabs (tombs No. 105, 106, 108, 109) or medium sized rocks (tombs No. 107, 110). The only exception is tomb 107, which is oriented north-south. The length of the chambers ranges from 3.35 to 5.3 m, though the widths and depths within a single tomb vary, based on the arrangement and type of stones used. In general, the width ranges between 1.5-2.0 m and the depths range between 1.4-2.11 m. The walls are perpendicular, the slab-like stones at the top are placed slightly forward towards the chamber. These serve as support bases for the roof stones of the tomb, which consists of a single row of 2-4 slabs (Figure 1/1-3).

The burials were made according to the decarnation rite. Human remains were not discovered in the looted tombs, though all the tombs contained fragmented remains of horses, sheep, and cattle, as well as complete remains of pigs.

A large number of rich and varied artifacts were discovered from these excavations – glass vases, buttons and beads, gold and silver items and jewelry, bronze and silver bowls, bracelets, bells, iron weapons and bridles, a Mesopotamian cylindrical stamp, black and red pottery. Even the looted tombs (Nos 108-110) contained artefacts which were crucial for dating these tombs.

Here we present some of the most notable materials discovered in the tombs.

Two bronze and one silver bowls (*piyāla*s) were found in Lori Berd's tomb No. 106. One of the bronze bowls is round, with a diameter of 17.5 cm, and a prominent convex centre (omphalos) around which there are concentric designed of large incised petal shapes, which give the bowl the appearance of an opened flower (Figure 2/10). These types of bowls are typical of contemporaneous West Asian burial offerings found in the tombs of high officials. A bowl nearly identical to the one found at Lori Berd was discovered in the great burial of Gordion (Phrygia), which dates to the end of the VIII century BC.[1] It is identified as a piyāla with an omphalos and 'Pétales' decorations; today it is located in the Ankara Museum. The difference between the bowl found at Lori Berd is that its diameter is about 15 cm, it does not have four corrugated belts around the omphalos or a narrow empty space below the rim.

It is likely that these two bowls, the one from Gordion and the one from Lori Berd, are of Urartian origin. Hereby the Urartian metal products, especially bronze vessels, were exported to Phrygia and farther west in great quantities should be mentioned.

The second bronze bowl is round, shallow (diameter: 14.5 cm), the rim is bent outward, and the base is flat. In the centre a small rosette with 16 petals is engraved (Figure 2/7). A similar rosette design is engraved on the base of a silver bowl (currently at the Louvre Museum in Paris) discovered by Jacques de Morgan in the late Achaemenid period royal burial (4th century BC) of Susa. It is noteworthy that the rosette on all three bowls – Lori Berd, Gordion, and Susa – contain 16 petals.

It should be noted that the rosette was a popular motif in Urartian art, either engraved or etched on the centre of disc-like or flat objects. This type of ornament is known from Karmir Blur,[2] from Lori Berd's Urartian burial (tomb No. 56-I),[3] and other places.

Similar rosettes are engraved on the separation belts of the reliefs and horse-drawn carriages carved above the entrance to the royal audience hall (or apadana) at Persepolis (6th-4th centuries BC).[4]

Golden bowls with engraved rosette ornaments with inscriptions bearing the names of Xerxes and Darius are known from Hamadan (5th century BC),[5] shallow

[1] Metzger 1969: 60f., Fig. 33.
[2] Piotrovskij 1955: 35 (Fig. 25), 47 (Fig. 36).
[3] Devedjyan 2010: 59, Fig. 8, Pl. XV/1.
[4] Ghirshman 1964: Figs 235, 239, 240, 257-260, 286.
[5] Ghirshman 1964: Figs 309-310.

bronze bowls with omphalos and various floral motifs have been found in western Iran.[6] These types of bowls were so widespread in this region and in Asia Minor in general that, according to A. Iessen, during the 6th-3rd centuries BC they probably reached as far as the Ural settlements via the northern Black Sea coast, the Caucasus, or Central Asia (in Khorezm or Aral steppes).[7]

The silver piyāla has a semi-spherical waist and a rim that is sharply bent outward (diameter: 14.5 cm).

Round bronze bowls with engraved and etched floral motifs have been found at Karmir Blur, which according to G. Tiratsyan had an influence on some later Achaemenid period bowls.[8]

Three more silver piyālas were discovered in Western Armenia, two of these have floral decorations (Erznka, Erzurum), the third found near Erznka is without decorations (second half of the 5th century BC).[9] The latter more closely resembles the bowl with a flower pattern in the centre discovered at Lori Berd.

In form, the undecorated silver piyālas are similar to the silver cups found in the territory of Armenia, which dates to the second half of the 5th century BC (currently at the British Museum), with the only exception that the latter are deeper set.[10] Three similar bowls, which date to the 7th-6th centuries BC, have also been found from the tombs of the burial ground located on the right bank of Mingechaur.[11]

Among the metal artifacts discovered in tombs No. 106 and 109 the 8-9 cm long bronze bells with iron clappers (Figures 3/4-5) are of particular interest. These are different from Urartian bells; they are cylindrical with a perpendicular, narrow opening, have vertical decorations and wide, arched canons. Four similar bells were discovered along with horse armor from Karmir Blur's Room 36. B.B. Piotrovsky dated these to the beginning of the 8th century BC. Similar examples are also known from Eastern Georgia, Northern Caucasus, Racha, and the Kazbek treasure. Veselovsky discovered a similar bell from the Elizavetinsk burial mound which dates to the 4th century BC.[12]

It cannot be excluded that the bells found at Karmir Blur are of a later date than the horse armor. It should be noted that the example, which dates to the 6th-5th centuries BC, found from Georgia's Khsania gorge (height: 9.4 cm) is not only a copy of the bells we found at Lori Berd, but it also has the same fir pattern decoration above the opening.[13] Another bell of smaller size has been found among the Akhalgoray hoard (5th-4th centuries BC).[14] We are inclined to assume that these bells are of a later date with lower boundary no earlier than the 6th century BC.

[6] Mahboubian 1997: Figs 321-323.
[7] Iessen 1952: 209-221.
[8] Tiratsyan 1964: 161, Pl. IV/3.
[9] Tiratsyan 1988: 58f., Pl. XI/1-2, XIII/3.
[10] Tiratsyan 1988: Pl. XIII/2.
[11] Aslanov *et al.* 1966: Pl. XI/1, XIV/1, XV/1.
[12] Piotrovskij 1955: 43f, 46, Fig. 35.
[13] Domanskij 1984: Fig. 35.
[14] Smirnov 1934: 58, Fig. 91.

Concerning the dating of the burial, a thick silver bracelet with a round cross section is of great significance (tomb No. 106). The ends are apart from one another, thicker, cut straight, and pushed inward at the centre (Figure 4/6). Similar bracelets made from bronze wire have been found in large quantities from the burials at Jrarat (6th-4th centuries BC),[15] Alget (4th century BC),[16] and Mingechaur (5th-3rd centuries BC).[17] They are also known from the Classical period burials of Oshakan.[18] These type of bracelets are associated with the Achaemenid cultural sphere and the golden bracelets found in the Oxus treasure and Susa burial (5th-4th centuries BC) are represent a plausible evidence to this.[19] They have been found across an extensive geographical area, spreading from Cyprus to Central Asia, whereas in Transcaucasia they were in use until the beginning of the 1st century AD.[20]

Most notable are the five cast bracelets with snake heads, two are made of silver and three of bronze (tomb No. 107). The ends of these bracelets are spread apart from one another and each end is shaped in the form of a quite realistic head of a snake. The snake heads were made using relief and deep-cut engraving techniques and they are so detailed that it is possible to differentiate their types (Figure 4/2-3, 5).

The silver bracelets are round circular in their cross-section with slight thickening towards the ends. The protruding and spherical eyes and mouths of the snakes are well emphasised, which gives them a fantastical and dreadful look. Hieroglyphic symbols are carved on the underside of the heads, on an even surface. One of the symbols is repeated on two bracelets and is reminiscent of a stylised head of a horned animal (Figure 4/1, 4).

One of the bracelets is more elegantly made, on the interior it is smooth, while its exterior surface is rounded, which gives it the appearance of a viper. The bracelets with the snake heads are quite different from one another, some are realistic while others are stylised. These appear during the Urartian period and continue to be used until the beginning of the 1st century AD.[21] Bracelets with stylised snake heads appear more frequently, while realistic depictions are more rare and are known only from the 8th-4th centuries BC.

The bracelets discovered in Atarbekyan's cromlech No. 1[22] and in Ziwiye[23] are akin to the silver bracelets we discovered at Lori Berd. Similar bracelets are also known from Golovino,[24] from the burials at Erebuni,[25] from Vornak's tomb No. 5,[26] and

[15] Mnatsakanyan, Tiratsyan 1961: 72, Pl. 2.
[16] Kuftin 1941: 36, Pl. X.
[17] Aslanov *et al*. 1966: Pl. XII/1.
[18] Yesayan, Kalantaryan 1988: Pl. XLVII/10-11.
[19] Porada 1962: 171.
[20] Tiratsyan 1988: 47f.
[21] Khachatryan 1976: 90.
[22] Mnatsakanyan 1955: Fig. 11.
[23] Ghirshman 1964: 113, Fig. 150.
[24] Martirosyan 1954: Pl. XVI/2-4.
[25] Martirosyan 1964: Pl. XXIV/6-9.
[26] Martirosyan 1964: Pl. XXIV/6-9.

Oshakan tomb No. 91;[27] the more finely made bronze bracelet is more akin to the one discovered at Khrtanoc.[28]

At Lori Berd these types of bracelets were found in large quantities; they have been discovered also in tombs No. 56 (silver and bronze) and No. 4 (gold, silver, and bronze).[29]

Bracelets with serpentine heads are associated with the Urartian culture. The snake was perceived as an entity with positive characteristics, as a symbol of fertility, water, earth, the household hearth, though it also had a negative connotation due to its association with the netherworld.

Among the golden jewelry, two pairs of earrings are most notable (tomb No. 106). The first is sickle-shaped and is made from rectangular golden wires. The sickle shape is enclosed in a double-layered loop. The ends of the first, inner, loop are nearly touching one another. The outer loop is decorated with closely spaced incised lines, which gives the impression of beaded decoration. The open space of the sickle-shape is decorated with a wavy golden wire (Figure 3/2). Stylistically these earrings are similar to double sickle-shaped golden earrings with beaded decorations from Akhalgora,[30] which are considered to be of Achaemenid type and have been dated to either the 5th-4th centuries BC[31] or 4th century BC.[32]

Their prototypes can be found in the Middle East, during the first half of the I millennium BC. These are the so-called swing-like, hollow, beaded, golden earrings. Numerous examples of this type have been found among the famous treasure of Ziwiye (presumably end of 7th century BC)[33] and from Karmir Blur.[34] There is an opinion that the earrings found in the treasure of Ziwiye were of Urartian origin, since during the 8th-7th centuries BC the Urartians wore western jewelry.[35] In the Scythian world this type of jewelry has Greek and Oriental origin and dates to the 5th-4th centuries BC.[36]

In terms of ornamental art and execution technique, the earrings of Lori Berd are remarkable examples. This kind of items are known from Transcaucasia from the 3rd millennium BC (Georgia), then in the middle of the 2nd millennium BC (Lori Berd tomb No. 15, Vanadzor), 10th century BC (Tolors), and more frequently between the 7th-6th centuries BC at Lori Berd and a number of sites in Georgia.

Long golden pendants are a later occurrence (Figure 3/1). At Lori Berd we found them for the first time. A golden diadem with similar pendants was discovered in 1946 from the Mingechaur burial field (5th-3rd centuries BC)[37] and a golden pendant with beads among the objects of the Akhalgora treasure.[38]

[27] Yesayan, Kalantaryan 1988: Pl. XCIII/3.
[28] Martirosyan 1954: Pl. V/25.
[29] Devedjyan 1981: 69, Fig. 29; *idem*. 2007: Pl. LXXXV/2.
[30] Smirnov 1934: Pl. III/25a-b.
[31] Gagoshidze 1976: 31.
[32] Ghirshman 1964: 426, Fig. 559.
[33] Ghirshman 1979: Pls III/5, XXIV/4.
[34] Piotrovskij 1955: 14; *idem*. 1962: 53.
[35] Ghirshman 1979: 27f.
[36] Petrenko 1978: 29f., Pl. 19.
[37] Aslanov *et al*. 1966: 11, Pl. I/3.
[38] Smirnov 1934: 32f., Pl. IV/42.

Similar earrings, made by the jewelers of Greek colonies of the Northern Black Sea, were worn by Scythian nobility of the 5th-3rd centuries BC.[39]

These types of ornaments appear in the territory of the Republic of Armenia during the Hellenistic period, such as those found at the royal tomb in Sisian (second half of the 1st century BC).[40]

Another rare artifact is the bee-shaped pendant made from embossed gold sheets. The head of the bee is represented by a small clasp ring, the body and wings represented by horizontal and parallel protruding lines (Figure 3/3). Thus far, we do not know of any other bee-shaped ornaments; however, there are numerous stamp seals dating to 2nd-1st centuries BC from Artashat that depict bees. In the Hellenistic period the bee was a symbol of the goddess of Artemis of Ephesus.[41]

Among the numerous iron objects is an axe with two cylindrical ends and an oval socket. One of the ends slightly widens and ends with a short, cylindrical protrusion (Figure 3/8). In Armenia iron axes of the Iron Age (Khrtanoc, Musieri, Kurtan, 7th-5th centuries BC) are associated with materials from the Northern Caucasus, Ossetia, and Bascharen.[42] Our specimen is closer to the battle-axe discovered from Persepolis, as well as to those depicted on the palace wall carvings.[43]

Two links from an Urartian bronze belt are also noteworthy (tomb No. 107).[44] One of these is an elongated plate with curbed edges which is divided into three equal square medallions, upon these leaping lions are embossed (Figure 3/7).

The same lions are depicted on the bronze belt discovered in the Urartian tomb at Nor Aresh.[45] According to the typology of U. Seidl, these are typical for the reign of King Rusa I, while the leaping lions depicted on the bronze belt links are characteristic to the reign of Ishpuini and Menua. The belts kept in Munich and Zurich date back to the time of Argishti I.[46]

The other is bird-like, or a so-called three-pronged bronze link (Figure 3/6). Several examples of this type of links with depictions of lions or lion-bull combination, with horsemen and with bird-like wings are held at the Munich Museum.[47]

The ceramics can be divided into two main groups. The first group is represented by black-gray, mostly unpolished jars and single-handled jars. The handles either have protruding lumps or they are corrugated with embossed decorations on the inside. Along with these Bronze and Iron Age black pottery there is also red pottery, largely piyālas, cups, platters, and little jugs, which stylistically are associated with Urartian, as well as post-Urartian ceramics. These are made of light pink clay, they are painted, but

[39] Petrenko 1978: 38, 40, Pl. 18/25, Pl. 20/21, Pl. 24/8.
[40] Khachatryan 2009: 44, Pl. XVI/8-9.
[41] Khachatryan, Neverov 2008: 42f., Pl. VII, Figs 744-757.
[42] Martirosyan 1964: 290f., Pl. XXXII.
[43] Schmidt 1957: Pl. 79/1; *idem*. 1953: Pl. 121.
[44] Devedjyan 2010: 76ff., Fig. 5, Pl. XVII/1-2.
[45] Martirosyan, Mnatsakanyan 1958: Pl. 5.
[46] Seidl 2004: 123, 153, 161 (Tafel 50c), 162 (Tafel 56a).
[47] Seidl 2004: 157, Abb. 112.

not slipped, and are not of high quality as the red ceramics observed in Urartian centres. In form, the plates and bowls are akin to metal ones (Figure 2/1-6).

The bird-shaped vessel and the pitcher with an anthropomorphic figure (tomb No. 107) are of particular interest (Figure 5/2-3).

Zoomorphic pottery in Transcaucasia lasts from the end of the 2nd millennium BC through the middle of the 1st millennium BC.

At Lori Berd this is the first time a bird-shaped vessel has been found. It is black-brown in colour with a polished surface, in a horizontal position, on either side the wings are represented by wide set distended lines, while the rest of the vessel is decorated with lightly incised line and net patterns. The neck is long with a dorsal strap running along the back which has four consecutive holes surrounded by protruding circles. The beak is open, the eyes are round and wide, made with disk-like applique. Above the waste there is an arched handle, behind which the mouth of the vessel is set (only partially preserved). It has two front legs (height: 5cm), which are triangular in cross-section, with 2.3-3 cm deep holes near the ends. The vessel has been restored, but the two legs at the rear and the tail of the bird was not preserved. The total height of the vessel is 26.3 cm and the preserved length is 21 cm, the neck with the head is 12 cm high. These types of vessels are unquestionably ritual in nature, with drainage through the beak and the cylindrical part.

Bird-shaped vessels have been discovered from Khrtanoc, Yerevan, Mingechaur, Khurvin, Ziwiye, and other places. In general, they were widespread in Western Iran and Eastern Transcaucasia. Some of these are stylised, whereas the rhytons from Khurvin,[48] Mingechaur, and Ziwiye are exceptionally realistic. Three were found at Mingechaur,[49] one of which is stylised, the second is incomplete, and the third, according to some scholars, looks like a dove. The example from Ziwiye is made from glass and resembles a duck.[50]

None of the pitchers known to us are similar to the one found at Lori Berd. With its long neck, the dorsal strap, the head, opening of the beak, and the sharp expression of the eyes it resembles the Achaemenid style of griffins. It is similar to the golden griffin found in Ziwiye (7th century BC), to the head of the bronze griffin from Susa (8th-6th centuries BC), as well as to the lapis lazuli griffin from Persepolis (5th-4th centuries BC). R. Ghirshman comparing the example found at Susa with the golden one from Ziwiye, believes that the latter undoubtedly originated from an Urartian workshop.[51]

Similar griffins are known at Persepolis, as well as on the handles of what is likely a golden pitcher carried by an Armenian nobleman depicted on one of the upper reliefs.[52]

It is possible that there was another bird-shaped vessel in this tomb, however, the highly fragmented pieces do not allow a reconstruction even on paper (Figure 5/1).

[48] Pogrebova 1977: 97, Pl. XX.
[49] Golubkina 1951: Figs 3, 10-11; Aslanov *et al.* 1959: 107, Pl. XXXVII/9, XLII/1.
[50] Ghirshman 1964: Abb. 394.
[51] Ghirshman 1964: Abb. 138, 269, 428.
[52] Roaf 1996: 218f.

The pitcher is black-brown, unevenly fired, with a narrow, long, and cylindrical neck, and with grooved belts around the base. The handle is angular, it starts from the middle of the neck and ends on the shoulder. On the front there is a man's head attached with incised facial features, and possibly legs.

Anthropomorphic pitchers are more rare. It has a slight resemblance to the human figure depicted on the karas-like vessel found in the Iron Age tomb at Talin.[53]

An alabastron (tomb No. 108) made from white-yellowish clay and blue-greenish glaze is among the more typical finds (Figure 3/9). They appear in the 8th century BC and become widespread from the Achaemenid through the Hellenistic periods. A glass example has been found from Karmir Blur,[54] and a glazed one from Oshakan. Alabastron with yellowish-cream colour, exactly like the one found from Lori Berd, and bottles with small handles have been found among the treasures[55] at Persepolis and in the hands of a palace woman depicted on one of the reliefs of the palace of Darius,[56] and two examples from the Achaemenid royal tombs at Susa (4th century BC).

Thus, the post-Urartian tombs with the abundance and wealth of their contents once again attest what was already known from the previous periods, namely the wealth of this society, and especially the continuous presence of the elite, their power, their involvement in the events of the period.

The few artifacts presented here do not leave any doubt that Lori Berd, while retaining its traditions, was still involved in the new political-economic-cultural sphere; the elite had surrounded themselves with precious objects of Achaemenid style and origin, had accepted certain new habits, likely not only because it was dictated by fashion, but also based on political considerations. Ethnic contacts also cannot be ruled out.

The tombs can be dated based on numerous archaeological parallels (6th-5th centuries BC). Tomb No. 107 is somewhat unique in that newly introduced artifacts appear alongside Urartian ones. It is also different from others by its orientation and wall structure, which allows us to date the tomb to the 6th century BC. However, there are also late materials, including a three-leaf red pitcher.

The excavations revealed that even after the collapse of the Urartian state, until the 5th century BC, regardless of political upheavals, Lori Berd continued to maintain its dominant position in the region. It is likely that it was included in the Achaemenid 18th satrapy, the northern boundary of which cutting across the left bank of Kura reached Eastern Georgia.

Considering the extreme scarcity of written sources, these and subsequent excavations at Lori Berd can shed light on the almost unknown history of Northern Armenia during this period.

[53] Avetisyan and Avetisyan 2006: 23f., Pl. 8, Fig. 9.
[54] Dzhanpoladyan 1964: 307ff.
[55] Schmidt 1953: Pl. 52/4, Pl. 65/4.
[56] Ghirshman 1964: Abb. 243.

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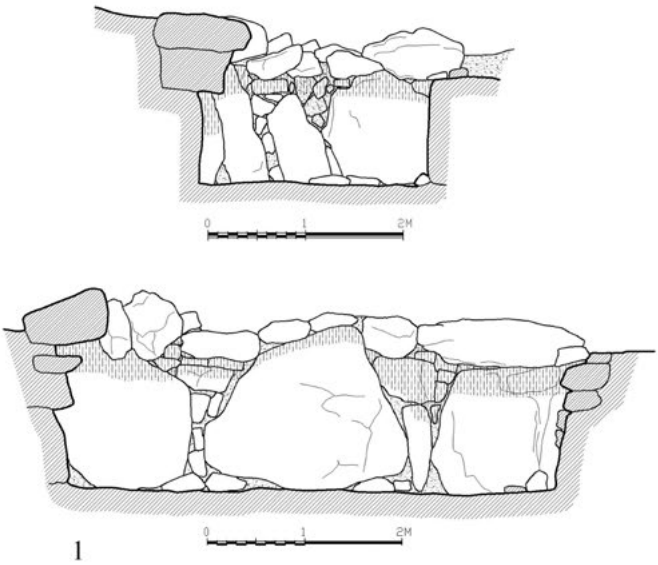

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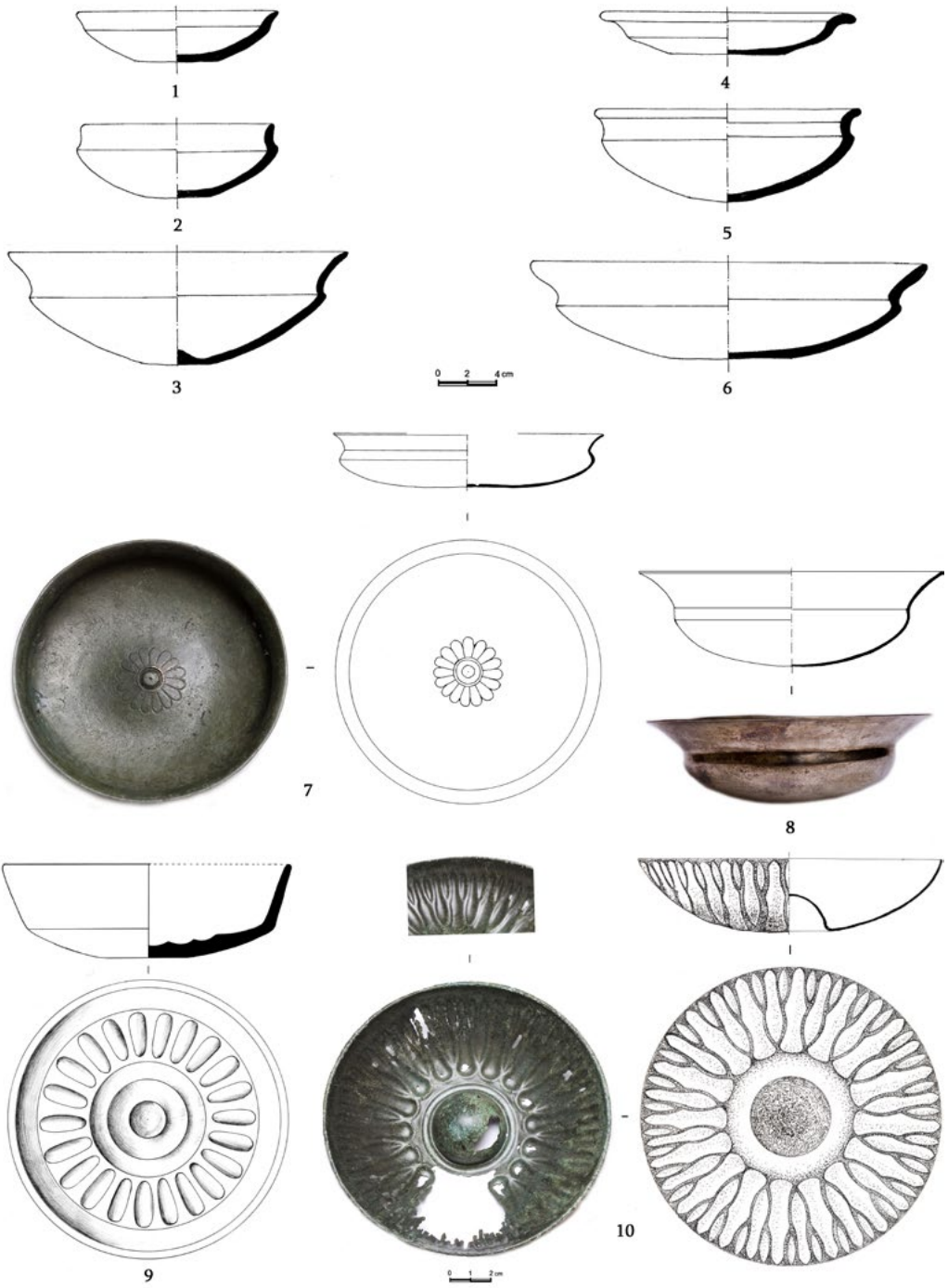
Figure 1



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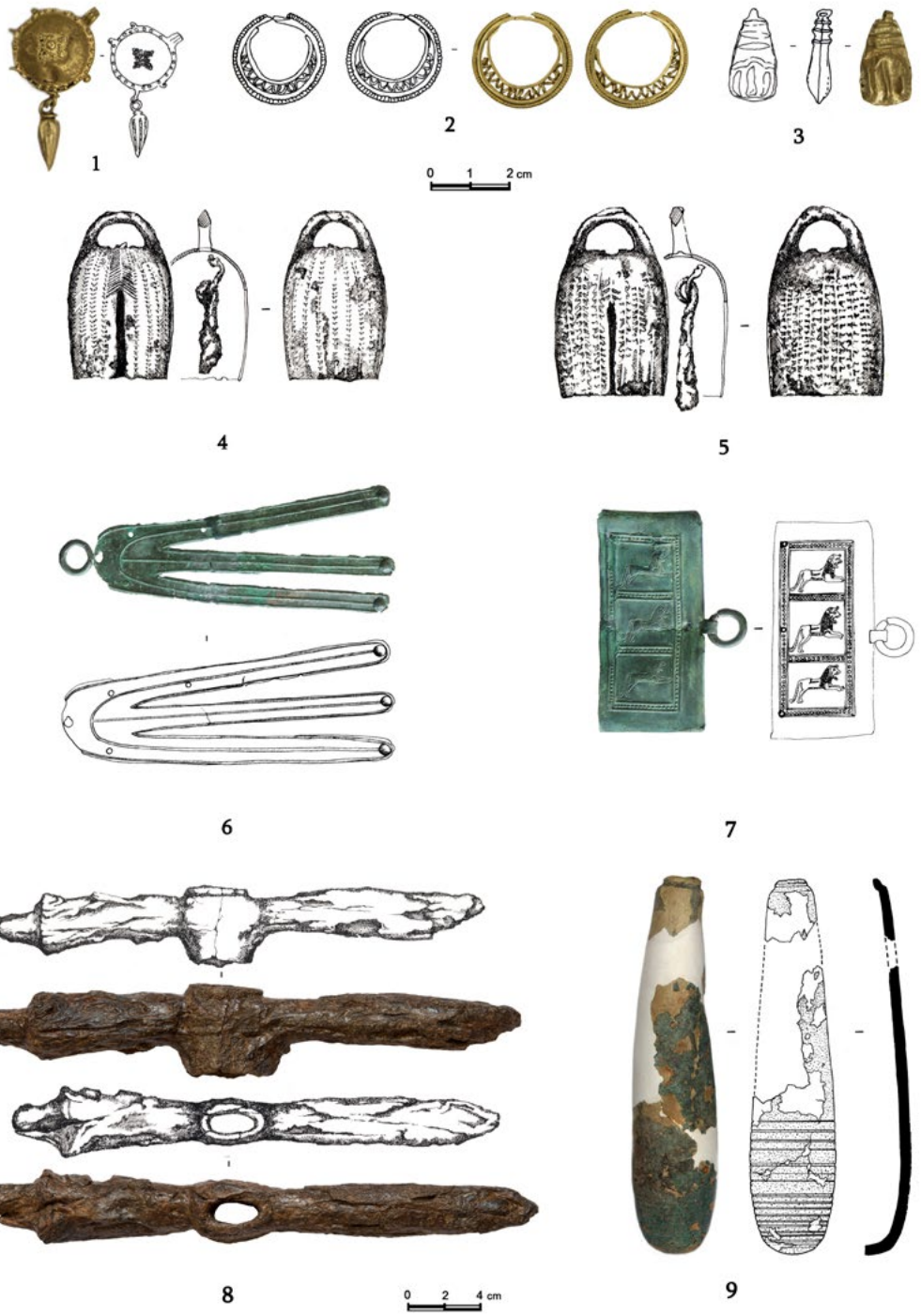

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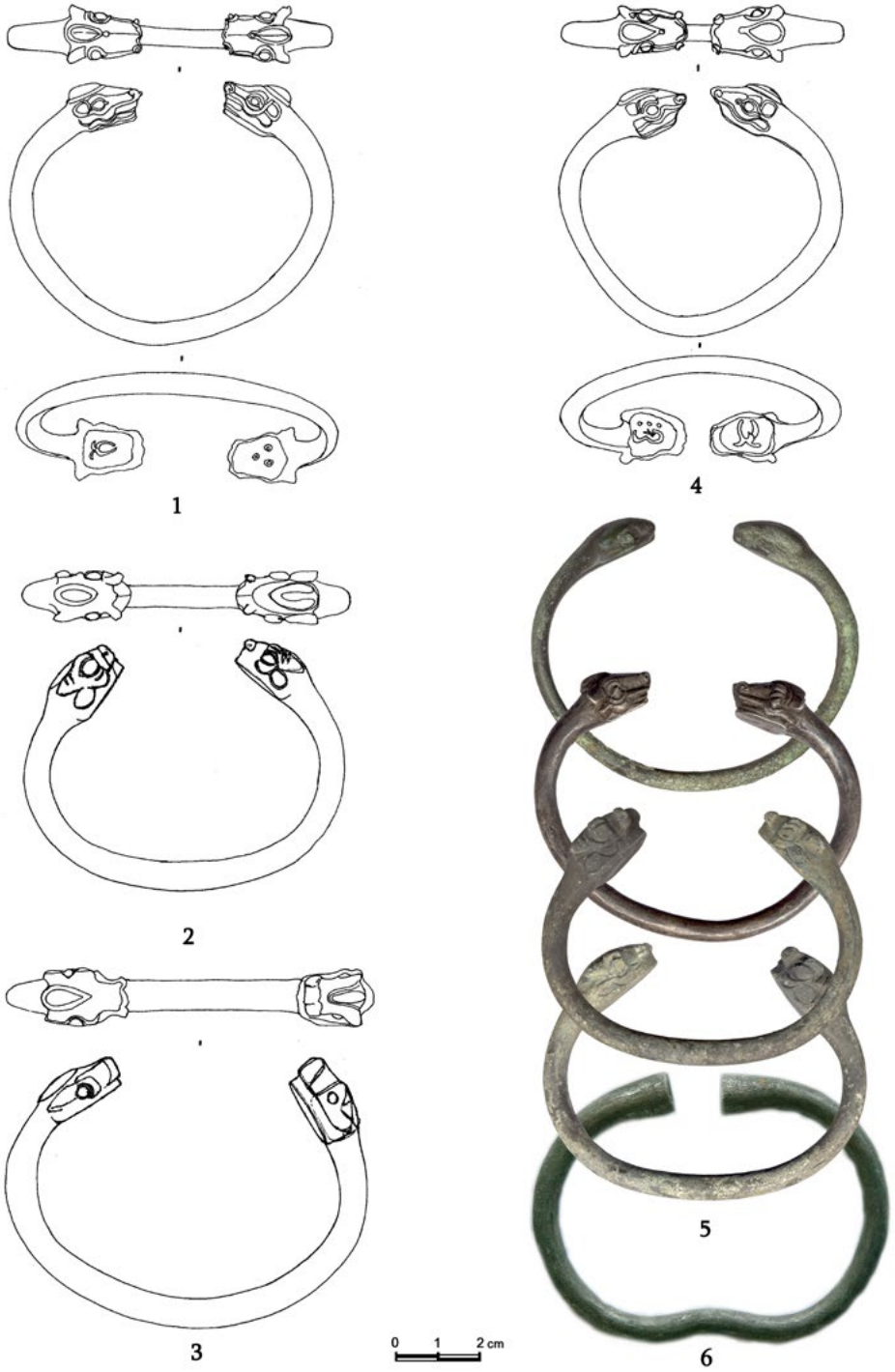

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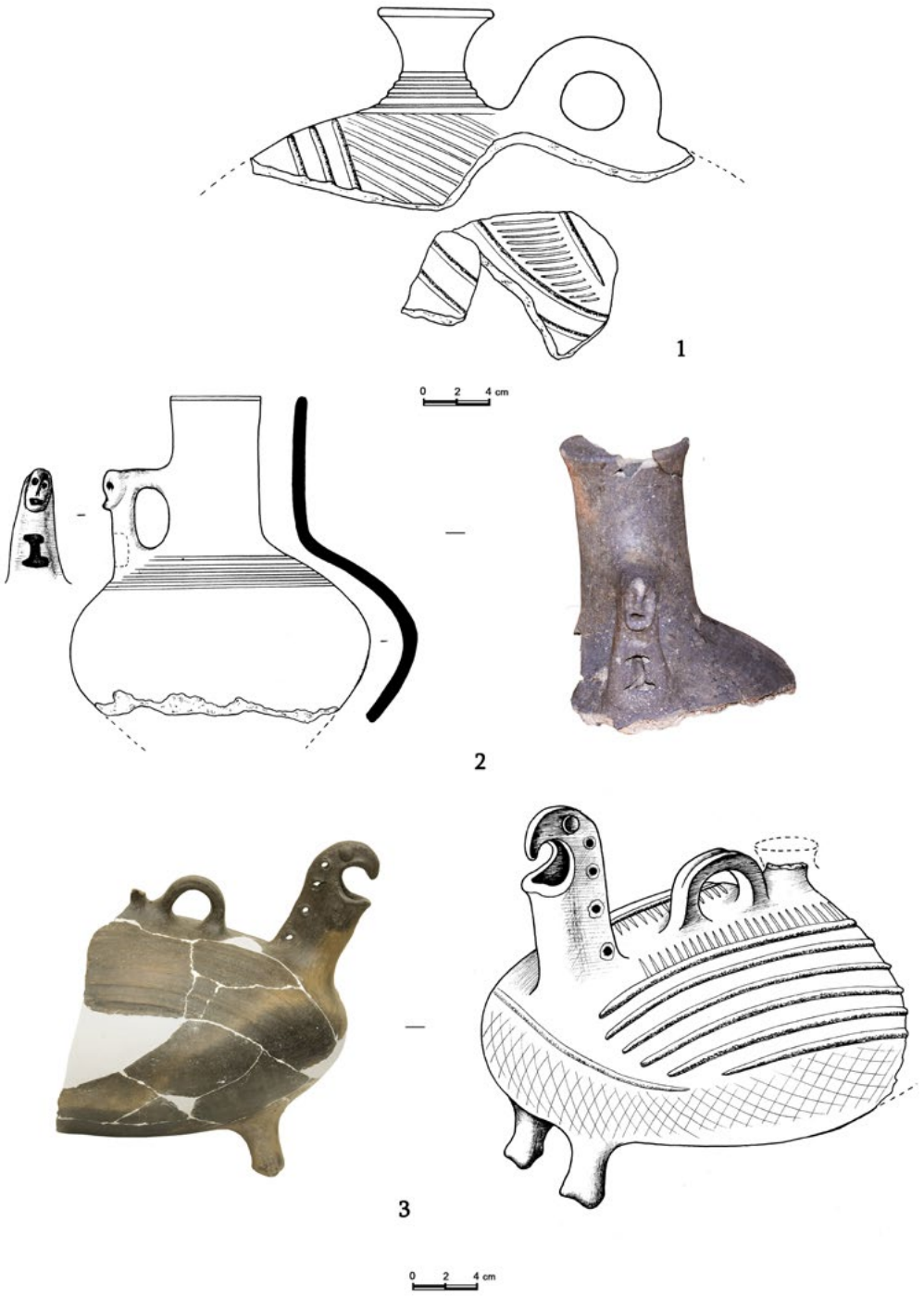

Figure 5